

"Lolo" Creek – What's in a Name?

The Salish and Pend d'Oreille people know this creek as *Tm̓m̓à* (No Salmon). According to their cultures, in the beginning, *Coyote* (who was sent to be a helper for the people) tried to bring salmon over Lolo Pass, but failed, hence the name No Salmon. The Lochsa-Clearwater drainage, on the west side of the Bitterroot Mountains, is called *Ep Sm̓à* (Has Salmon). *Tm̓m̓à* is and has always been an important area to the Salish and Pend d'Oreille.

When Lewis and Clark first passed through here in September 1805, they named this creek Travelers' Rest Creek, after their camp about 15 miles east of here near Lolo, Montana. On March 18, 1810, in the vicinity of Perma, Montana, early explorer David Thompson wrote in his journal that he met a free trapper of French descent named Lolo. In the 1850's a French trapper named Lawrence Rence was known as *LoLo* and lived up Lolo Creek. This may have been the

same man. The Salish, who lived in this area at that time pronounced

Lawrence as *Lou Lou* or *Lo Lo*, since there are many aspects of the Salish language that have different letter sounds than English.

The "R" sound, for example is pronounced like the letter "L" in Salish.

Rence was killed by a grizzly bear and buried near his home on a bench above Grave Creek.

Grave Creek is near here and got its name from Rence's grave. Old timers still remember a cross on a tree near Grave Creek.

While no one can ever confirm the origin, the name "Lolo" has persisted to this day. Lolo Montana, Lolo Creek, Lolo Peak, Lolo Pass and the Lolo National Forest are all name descendants of this historic word.

Some historians suggest that the word *lolo* may have originated from the trade language that was used in this area long before Europeans arrived. In that trade language, the word *lolo* meant to bring across or carry across on the back. Early traders, including Rence, who carried trade goods over the Bitterroot Mountains, may have been called *lou lou* or *lolo*.

